

October 18, 2020

To:

Colchester Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Jeffrey Burt
Colchester Board of Education
Colchester First Selectman, Ms. Mary Bylone

From:

Michael Dubreuil
180 Woodbine Road, Colchester

References:

- (A) School Reopening Plan; Colchester Public Schools; V.2; dated August 25, 2020
- (B) CPS Instructional Model Update; Superintendent Burt; dated September 30, 2020
- (C) Addendum 4 Interim Guidance for Decision-Making Regarding the Use of In-Person, Hybrid (Blended), or Remote Learning Models in Connecticut Schools during COVID-19; Connecticut State Department of Education; dated August 3, 2020
- (D) CPS Instructional Model Update; Superintendent Burt; dated October 1, 2020
- (E) COVID-19 Update October 16, 2020; Superintendent Burt; dated October 16, 2020
- (F) Series 0000/1000 Community/Board Operations, Policies, Regulations and Bylaws of the Colchester Public Schools; Colchester Public Schools
- (G) Great Barrington Declaration; <https://gbdeclaration.org/>; dated October 4, 2020
- (H) Series 9000 Bylaws of the Board, Policies, Regulations and Bylaws of the Colchester Public Schools; Colchester Public Schools

Attachments:

- (1) Chatham Health District Status Report; dated October 12, 2020

To all concerned,

The School Reopening Plan, Reference (A), defines the current plan for reopening Colchester schools during the pandemic. Page 4 indicates, "The Colchester Public School District is working to develop procedures and protocols to ensure a safe and secure return to on-campus instruction for the Fall of 2020. The State of Connecticut has directed districts to plan for all students to return to traditional instruction to start the school year, so long as public health data continues to support this model."

Reference (A) defines learning models based on the level of community spread of COVID-19; the learning models defined are: In-Person Learning, Hybrid Learning, and Remote Learning. The plan is deficient and recognizes a void in the plan by noting, "As

of July 24, 2020, districts have not been provided with a detailed model of when learning should shift between the three models above.”

In a September email to Colchester families and staff, Reference (B), Superintendent Burt references Reference (C) and indicates, “based on Addendum 4 to the CSDE “Adapt, Advance, Achieve” plan, the leading indicator of less than 10 new cases per 100,000 population has been consistent and favors full, in-person learning.” Indirectly Reference (C) fills the void in Reference (A).

The town of Colchester is located within the area of cognizance of the Chatham Health District (CHD). On a weekly basis CHD publishes a publicly available weekly status report on COVID-19. The current weekly status report is provided as Enclosure (1).

According to the CHD weekly status report, Enclosure (1), the following statements are facts:

- The 7-day moving average per 100,000 population community case rate has never exceeded 10 new cases per day.
- Within the health district, 4 out of 6 school systems are operating in the “Full-Time” learning model.

Despite guidance from the Connecticut Department of Education, and health data supporting full-time in-person learning, Superintendent Burt chose to start the school year in the hybrid learning model. This decision contradicts the plan; no explanation that references the plan and health data was ever given to parents.

In an October 1st email, Reference (D), Superintendent Burt addressed the reopening of Colchester schools. In the email he indicated the schools would remain in the hybrid model due to “a significant increase in community spread in Norwich as well as other communities in the area.” The Superintendent did not address the plan or the health data. The term “significant increase” is a meaningless term without additional information; for example, was the increase significant with regards to Reference (C). A review of the CHD data during that time revealed a negligible increase in community spread. In fact, the data would merit entering or remaining in the full-time in-person learning model.

In an October 16th email on COVID-19 and school reopening, Reference (E), Superintendent Burt never mentions the plan or actual local health data. The letter states, “Current data show an increase in both the State of CT and New London County, meaning that cases per 100,000 are on the rise. If this trend continues, we will have to cautiously revisit the reentry plan.” Health data is vaguely presented without context.

The reference to county level data may be because of a new emphasis by the Connecticut State Department of Education to include county level data when making learning model decisions. The use of New London county data when making learning model decisions for Colchester should be carefully considered. The following problems exist:

- Colchester is geographically distant from the center of New London country. The distance is so great, the county's de-facto newspaper, The Day, does not offer home delivery to Colchester.
- Colchester is uniquely bordered by 3 other counties: Middlesex, Hartford, and Tolland.

It would seem appropriate that when making learning model decisions when using county level health data that the counties of New London, Middlesex, Hartford, and Tolland should be weighted. The weighting criteria should be documented in the reopening plan.

Another reason given by the State Department of Education to use county level health data is to increase stability of the data, The data from CHD is remarkably stable, and has always been below 10 new cases per 100,000 population. The data supports Colchester using a full-time in-person learning model.

The Colchester Public School system follows a "Code of Ethics" (Reference F). The code of ethics defines how board members should conduct themselves, " In fulfilling my responsibilities, I will think of 'children first.'" It is imperative to understand that although we measure COVID-19's effect on the broader community that we reflect on the statement "children first." COVID-19 is a virus that is less harmful to children than influenza (Reference G). To my knowledge, influenza has never caused Colchester Public schools to enter into learning models that consist of remote education.

I propose the following recommendations.

To the Colchester Board of Education:

- Add an agenda item to board meetings to discuss the current COVID-19 Plan and Response. Although the board should not try to "run the schools", it is imperative that during this pandemic response they are updated on the latest policies and actions.
- With respect to the Code of Ethics (Reference E) the board should consider censuring Superintendent Burt in accordance with Reference (H). The superintendent has:

- Failed to maintain the School Reopening Plan (Reference A)
- Failed to follow the School Reopening Plan (Reference A)
- Failed to ensure the community is fully and accurately informed about our schools.
 - When communicating with parents on school reopening the superintendent never references the School Reopening Plan (Reference A). As evidence in Reference (D) and (E).
 - I attended a Zoom meeting on October 1, 2020 on a JJIS Instructional Model Parent Discussion. I did not leave that meeting with the understanding there was a plan with metrics on reopening; or the fact that we were currently not following the plan. I have spoken to other parents who aren't aware a formal school reopening plan actually exists.

To Colchester First Selectman, Ms. Mary Bylone:

- In an October 8, 2020 Facebook Live session you indicated that you have no jurisdiction on the school system; however you do have periodic conversations with Superintendent Burt. I would encourage you that during your conversations with Superintendent Burt that you extol the virtues of transparency and integrity.

To Colchester Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Jeffrey Burt:

- Update the missing information in the School Reopening Plan (Reference A) with information from the Connecticut State Department of Education (Reference C).
- Continue to maintain and re-issue the School Reopening Plan (Reference A) with any changes.
- When communicating with parents on reopening the schools, reference the School Reopening Plan (Reference A) and provide the health data your decisions are based on.
- In accordance with the School Reopening Plan (Reference A) and health data from CHD (Attachment 1) immediately enter into the in-person learning model.

Sincerely,
Michael Dubreuil

Chatham Health District Status Report
October 12, 2020

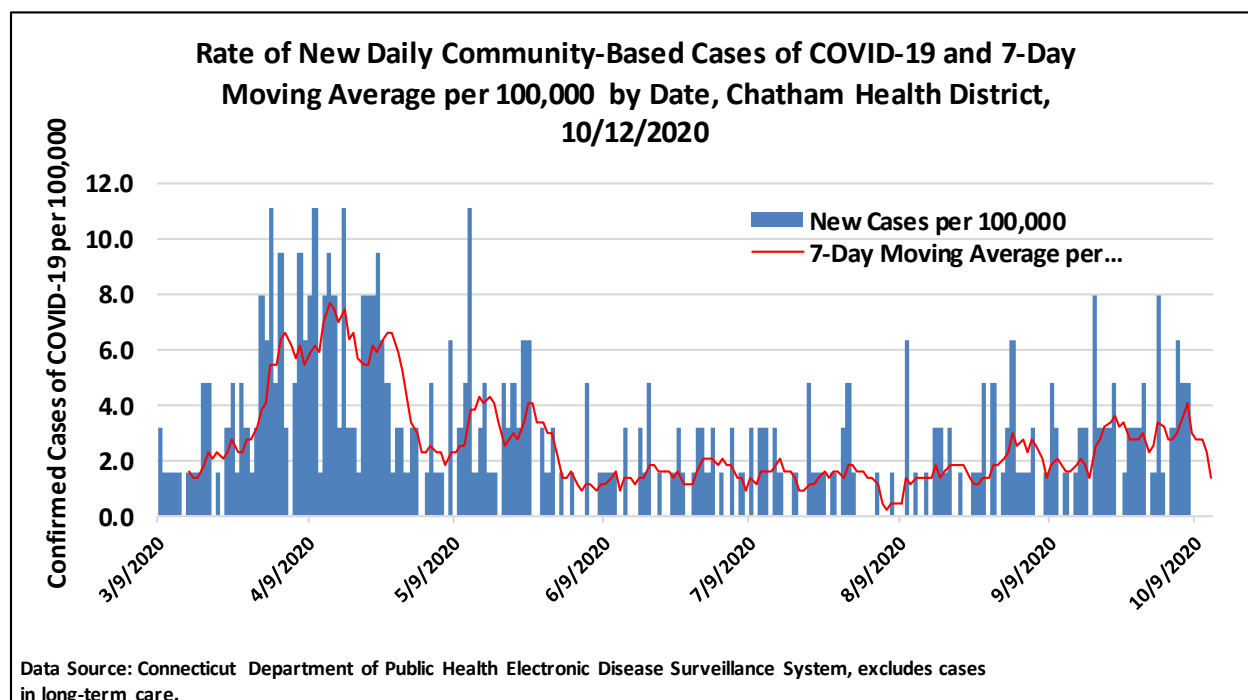
Chatham Health District Status Report

Report Date	October 12, 2020
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Cumulative COVID-19 Cases as of 10/12/2020							
	Male	Female	Median Age	Max Age	Min Age	Total Cases*	Deaths
Colchester	45%	55%	55	101	1	138	6
East Haddam	68%	32%	50	77	4	37	1
East Hampton	38%	62%	47	94	18	74	3
Hebron	44%	56%	47	82	10	54	2
Marlborough	36%	64%	70	99	9	105	20
Portland	45%	55%	66	101	17	89	14
Total CHD	44%	56%	56	101	1	497	46

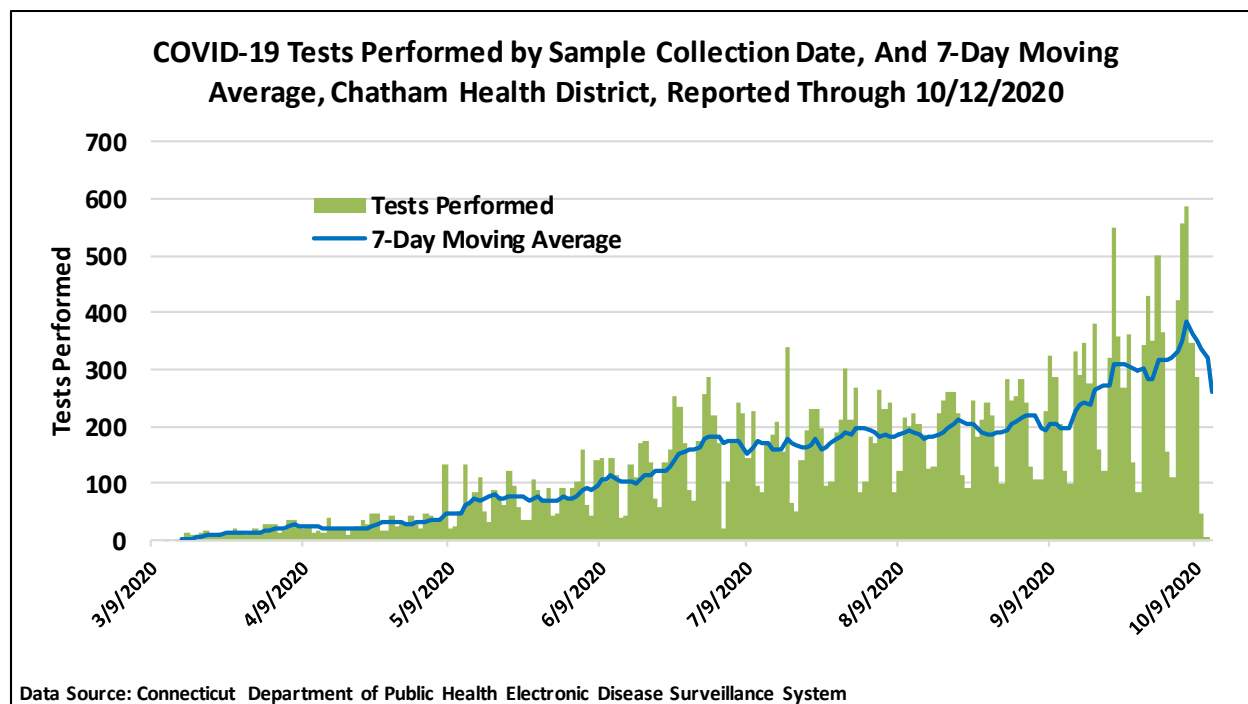
*Case numbers in the table above include cases from long-term care facilities, and may be different from those reported by the State of Connecticut due to lag in reporting and surveillance system inconsistencies.

Chatham Health District is reporting case numbers weekly on Mondays. For the most current reports of case counts by town on other days, please visit <https://portal.ct.gov/coronavirus> and click on "Connecticut COVID-19 Data Tracker".



Cases in Long-term care facilities have been excluded from the graph above to better reflect the risk of COVID-19 in the community, and align with CT DPH metrics for COVID-19 alerts and schools.

Transmission of COVID-19 in the community in Chatham health District has accelerated since mid-August. The 7-day moving average of cases has nearly doubled compared to the rates seen over much of the summer. Most new cases in the community continue to reflect recent out-of-state travel, testing associated with college students, household contacts of those individuals, and private social interactions. Cases are identifying high numbers of close contacts during contact tracing. Personal protective measures continue to be the best way to prevent transmission – wear a mask, avoid crowds, stay 6 feet away from others as much as possible, wash your hands frequently, and stay home when sick. Household members of people sick with COVID-19 continue to be at the highest risk for developing infection with COVID-19. People who are confirmed to have COVID-19 should isolate themselves away from others for at least 10 days, including from members of their own household by staying in a separate room of the house, and using a separate bathroom if possible.



SARS-CoV-2 Tests (PCR Viral Detection, and Antigen) and % Positive as of 10/12/2020

	April		May		June		July		August		September		October to Date	
	Tests	Positive	Tests	Positive	Tests	Positive	Tests	Positive	Tests	Positive	Tests	Positive	Tests	Positive
Colchester	219	10.0%	625	2.4%	1188	0.6%	1729	0.1%	1553	0.3%	2147	3.5%	1085	2.6%
East Haddam	58	8.6%	204	3.9%	435	0.7%	619	0.3%	661	1.4%	881	0.6%	522	0.8%
East Hampton	165	21.2%	369	5.7%	666	1.2%	993	0.6%	1113	0.7%	1453	0.8%	554	0.7%
Hebron	79	13.9%	265	3.8%	460	0.4%	649	0.5%	775	0.3%	1008	1.7%	420	2.6%
Marlborough	116	30.2%	214	21.5%	416	4.3%	585	0.5%	626	0.3%	899	0.3%	343	0.3%
Portland	127	34.6%	307	5.5%	596	1.8%	958	1.0%	1073	0.6%	1350	0.7%	453	0.7%
All CHD Towns	764	20.0%	1984	5.9%	3761	1.3%	5533	0.5%	5801	0.5%	7738	1.6%	3377	1.5%

Testing of residents in Chatham Health District has accelerated, and the 7-day moving average is approaching 400 tests per day. A surge in October may be due to long-term care facility testing and community-based pop-up testing in Colchester and other parts of Eastern Connecticut deployed to address rising transmission rates in this part of the state. Testing is widely available for Connecticut residents. The most common method used is viral detection tests (PCR), but antigen tests are also being frequently used now. Both types of tests detect current infections, and are the only test data reported in this analysis. **The percentage of those test results that are positive to date in the month of October is 1.5%.**

Surveillance for nursing home and assisted living facilities can be found at:
<https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus/Nursing-Homes-and-Assisted-Living-Facilities>

The latest school reopening indicators can be found at:
<https://data.ct.gov/stories/s/CT-School-Reopening/ddy2-ijgu/>

CHD Call Volume: Heavy. School reopening guidance and contact tracing support. Outdoor recreation and event guidance. Routine land use. COVID-19 Social distancing and business compliance complaints. Questions related to the travel quarantine. Routine housing and nuisance complaints.

Town Status:

Town	Emerg Declared	EOC Status	EMD	EOC Phone	Town Offices	Schools
Colchester (R4)	3/16/20	Partial	Sean Shoemaker	860.209.6271	Open to the Public	Hybrid
E Haddam (R3)	3/18/20	Partial	Craig Mansfield		Open to the Public	Full
E Hampton (R3)	3/20/20	Partial	Rich Klotzbier	860.267.0088	Open to the Public	Full
Hebron (R3)	3/13/20	Partial	Paul Bancroft	860.748.2562	Open to the Public	Full
Marlborough (R3)	3/16/20	Partial	Rich Antonelli	860.712.4931	Closed to the Public	Full
Portland (R3)	3/14/20	Partial	Don Gouin	860.918.1841	Open to the Public	Hybrid